

## THE NEW CHALDÆANS;

OR, THE ULTRA-VIOLET ART.

*(My Experiences with the Magic Ground-Glass.)*

FIRE by the descriptions in a morning paper this month of the Black Art as practised under the magistrates' noses in the West End of London at the present day, I determined to do a little investigation on my own account. I must premise that I am acquainted with a Professor of Psycho-physiognomy, whose At Homes are frequently attended by a Christian Scientist, whose thought-reading dressmaker is on confidential terms with the crystal-gazing lady's-maid of the clairvoyante in question, or (as she prefers to be called) the Spectroscopic Mage. Through these devious channels I obtained the necessary introduction and password, together with the clues to her laboratory and sanctum, which I regret to say I am forbidden to reveal under pain of instant polarisation. I therefore took the first bus, and, by the production of three-pence, hypnotised the conductor into giving me a ticket for the requisite distance. I then electro-magnetised the driver into stopping his vehicle at the corner of a fashionable street, the headquarters of the present-day mystics, which connects Piccadilly with Oxford Street, and straightway followed up the clues . . .

On arriving at my destination I passed through a series of thirteen ante-chambers, the first of which was illuminated with a blue light, and the subsequent rooms with a gradually increasing violet tinge, and all of them thronged with the Smart Set in various stages of hysteria and collapse. As, however, I was armed with a metabolic tessera which I picked up the other day at Eleusis, I was ushered by a succession of attendant demiurges into the Presence without more ado. The arcanum was suffused with the invisible hyperactinic rays of the spectrum, so that I was unable to see the Mage, and was only aware of being in her proximity by the impact of ions at my finger-ends. When the cerebral disturbance caused by these cathode cross-currents had temporarily subsided, I ventured to breathe again, and found I was still alive. I was further assured of this by hearing a voice, in which I fancied I recognised a faint Cockney accent. I felt more than ever on the very edge of the Borderland between East and West when it commanded me to transfer all the precious metal and paper in my pockets into an alembic dimly illumined with radium. This done, I stated my purpose, and forthwith fell into a semi-cataleptic state on being bidden to thrust my head under the folds of some sable velvety material and gaze, in the darkness, at



## NUNC AUT NUNQUAM.

Voice from bottom of ditch. "HOLD HARD A MINUTE! MY MONEY HAS SLIPPED OUT OF MY POCKETS, AND IT'S ALL DOWN HERE SOMEWHERE!"

the Magic Rectangle of ground crystal. It appeared to be part of a piece of mechanism which was supported on a tripod and connected somehow with a pair of prisms set at an angle . . .

After a period of tense silence the prophetess recommenced. "You have just come into the spectroscope in an inverted position," she chaunted in a weird monotone. "I see by the helium lines that in two days' time you will be wishing everyone a Happy New Year. I see you put on your hat and greatcoat and leave the house. I see you meet a lady in Hyde Park by the Achilles statue. She passes you by, for she does not know you. I see you enter your Club and sit down—I think on a seat with padded cushions, yes, I see you order a drink—it is whisky and soda."

I was so intensely interested that my throat became quite dry by auto-suggestion. "By the D. lines," continued the

Pythia, "I see you are playing at Bridge, yes, there are three other players, and your opponents have won a Grand Slam. You feel in your pockets, and they are empty . . . What is this? You rush out in the street into the arms of a policeman—you are arrested for the use of bad language in a public place. Ah—"

She broke off abruptly.

"I can see nothing more of you," she said. "It is useless to tax the crystal further. You may regain your normal attitude."

I groped for the door, and my heart beat so violently that it bumped me up against the mystagogue in waiting, and I knew no more until I found myself out in the street.

I thereupon registered a resolve not to go near the Club on New Year's Day, and am just off into the country, where I hope the neo-Chaldæan lady is too busy with her clients to follow me.

## STUDIES OF BLIGHTED LIVES.

## IV.—THE NEW RENAISSANCE.

I KNEW him in his yearning youth,  
Before the change that brought the heart's ache,  
A plunger down the wells of Truth,  
And sworn to follow Art for Art's sake.  
O frost that nips the nascent rose!  
O bloom that prematurely blithers!  
How could we then forecast the close  
Of ANDREA DEL RESARTO SMITHERS?

A front like PHIDIAS (ancient Greek),  
A mouth the very mate of TITIAN's,  
A CHANTREY's chin, a WATTEAU's cheek,  
A WHISTLER's eye for exhibitions;  
Dowered with a halo fitting tight  
As clings the mould about a jelly—  
He was to be the black-and-white  
Equivalent of BOTTICELLI!

The Editor of *Brush and Plume*,  
A man of sound commercial fibre,  
Thought ANDREA's art might be a boom  
And catch the better-class subscriber;  
But often, owing to the stress  
Of more immediate local matters,  
That graphic print would go to press  
Without his prancing nymphs and satyrs.

Then came the sudden Kodak phase,  
When Art was shelved for Actualities,  
The Living-Types-of-Beauty craze,  
Stage Frights and semi-nude banalities;  
Back flew the latest masterpiece  
Enclosed with editorial strictures:  
"These contributions now must cease;  
No further use for fancy pictures."

The blow, although no blood was spilt,  
Could hardly fail to wring the withers  
Of one so delicately built  
As ANDREA DEL RESARTO SMITHERS;  
He bowed before the crushing fates,  
Then rose again by nice gradations,  
And now he does the fashion plates  
Published in *Woman's Transformations*.

'Tis true he owns a sumptuous flat  
Who once conversed with gods in garrets;  
I grant he's growing sleek and fat  
On turtle soup and vintage clarets;  
But none the less, when I recall  
The former hopes on which he fasted,  
I recognise the moral fall,  
The great career untimely blasted.

O. S.

NAVAL CONVEYANCING.—From the *Liverpool Sporting Express* we gather that "active preparations are stated to have been set on foot by the British Admiralty in view of the crisis in the Far East." In the same column is to be found the statement (suspiciously ominous when read in connection with the above), that "six brass cannon which adorned the parade of the Rotunda at Woolwich have mysteriously disappeared."

THE following appreciation reaches us from India, and refers to a brand of Trichinopoly cigars:

"A genuine stuff will fall back on its excellence for public sympathy, and every one could unhesitatingly depend upon it that a thing would have but a short-lived possession which does not materially keep itself in toe with the assurances given out concerning it."

## PICKY BACK.

(Being the Fourth Passage from the re-incarnation of Picklock Holes.)

It was a foggy evening in the early part of December, and HOLES and I were, as usual, sitting together in my modest but comfortable first-floor apartments (£2 a week, lights not included) in Baker Street. The lamp, an Argand, was burning brightly on the centre of the table, and its diffused light, moderated by an unpretending green shade, shone on the cold ascetic features of the most phenomenal thought-expert of this or any other age. His lean hands were extended on the arms of his chair, and a slight drumming noise made by his long lean fingers showed that his mind was busy. I was sitting at the other side of the room, devoting myself, according to my custom, partly to a profound admiration of his many qualities of head and heart, and partly to not being noticed by the impassive object of my enthusiasm.

At last HOLES looked up. His hands still remained comparatively idle, but his face was working convulsively, as faces are apt to do under the overpowering influence of some sudden detective emotion. Then he spoke:—

"I don't agree with you, friend POTSON," he said sharply. "The man, of course, is stout and has a hare-lip, but he is otherwise not unsuited to the amenities of polite society."

I was about to gasp with astonishment, not having the very vaguest idea of what he was referring to, but a stern expression on HOLES's face warned me to be careful. Accordingly I fell back on a formula suitable for all such occasions, and merely remarked in an awe-struck voice, "HOLES, you become more and more marvellous every day! How on earth did you manage?"—I was about to add (somewhat incautiously, I admit)—"to find out with such extraordinary precision exactly what I was not thinking about?" But HOLES interrupted me.

"The simplest thing in the world, my dear POTSON, when you once come to know the steps of the process. You want to know how I found out you were thinking that our friend CHICKWEED was an outsider? Nay, nay, do not interrupt me. I know what you are going to say, so you need not say it. This is how I discovered it. You have an inkmark on the first finger of your right hand. As you looked at it your lips moved. Hence we get ink-lip. The letter before i is h, and n and k are by DONDERSKOPF's well-known law closely related to a and r. Thus, instead of 'ink' we get 'har' and, since EDGAR ALLAN POE has shown in the story of the 'Gold Bug' that e is the letter of most frequent occurrence in the language, we just pop e on at the end of the word, and thus we get 'hare-lip.' CHICKWEED is the only man of our acquaintance who possesses that painful labial peculiarity, and therefore I knew that you must be thinking of him. Do you follow me?"

It was now permissible to gasp, and I did so.

"HOLES, HOLES," I murmured in a deeply appreciative voice, "will you never cease to astound me?" HOLES waved the compliment aside, and I was just about to question him further on his remarkable gift of thought-reading when an agitated step sounded in the passage, the sitting-room door was unceremoniously flung open, and a dishevelled young man with his hat pressed down to his chin and a face bearing the evident marks both of dissipation and of suffering flung himself violently into the middle of the room.

"Mr. HOLES," he shouted in an agonised voice, "save me, save me. I am the miserable, the persecuted, the down-trodden—but tush, why should I tell my name to a man who knows everything by intuition? Suffice it to say that, as you have already guessed, I am indeed he, and that the plot of which I am the victim is thickening every moment. Save me, oh save me!"

With these words he collapsed in a heap on the floor, and no efforts of mine availed to resuscitate him. In desperation I was about to apply my 10-horse-power galvaniser, when HOLES stopped me.

"No bungling, friend POTSON," he hissed. "I know this man. It is"—and with a dramatic gesture he uncovered his (HOLES's) head and sang a few bars of what was evidently a national anthem—"It is the unhappy monarch of Paflogonia!"

I knelt and kissed the fallen King's hand. "What shall we do with him?" I asked.

HOLES's face grew stern. "Throw him out of the third-floor window," he said. "It is what he himself would have wished, for it is the only method of saving him from his relentless foes."

I did as HOLES commanded me. At the subsequent coroner's inquest, which HOLES very generously attended, the young man's name was given as SMITH, and under this name and a plain headstone he was buried. The creature who now sits upon the throne of Paflogonia is, of course, an impostor, but, for reasons of state, which I have never, I admit, been able to fathom, HOLES has consistently refused to denounce him. When I urge him to this course he simply smiles and says, "POTSON, you must leave these matters to me. In my own good time I shall do what the necessity of the case may force upon me, but for the present I shall not disturb the peace of Paflogonia." And with that I am forced to be content.

#### SOME CHRISTMAS APPEALS.

The following advertisement appeared last week in the personal column of a morning newspaper:—

**A**USTRALIAN Lady, young, dreads a boarding-house Christmas, and will consider INVITATION to DINE with family on Christmas Day.

We have pleasure in reproducing some other "agonies":—

**H**OUSEHOLDER, Middle-aged, desirous of escaping Christmas bills and boxes, will accept a FREE TOURIST TICKET Round the World.

**B**ACHELOR UNCLE, elderly, with forty-five Nephews and Nieces (including ten God-children), will gladly transfer his LIABILITIES to an OBLIGING MILLIONAIRE.

**C**URMUDGEON, old, anxious to avoid Christmas altogether, will Entertain—an OFFER of HOSPITALITY from the Sultan of TURKEY or the Grand Lama of TIBET.

**G**ENTLEMAN, of the Usual Age and Unbounded Philanthropy, but with Limited Means to gratify the same, will



CHAS. PEASE D.T.

#### ABSENT-MINDED.

The "Young Man." "GOOD MORNING, MISS SMITH. I AM SO SORRY. I CAN'T THINK WHERE I PUT THE ROSE I PROMISED TO BRING YOU!"

[He had put it in his hat, so as to be on a soft spot.]

receive FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE from any DESERVING CAPITALIST, and will Celebrate the Occasion in his Company at some Leading LONDON RESTAURANT.

**C**HARWOMAN, of No Particular Age, but of Guaranteed Appetite, will Take Care of the LARDER and CELLAR of any WELL-TO-DO FAMILY leaving Town.

**B**ROKER'S MAN, old-established and reliable, who has no FIRESIDE of his Own, will be pleased to BOARD with a SPLENDID BANKRUPT on the Usual Terms.

**L**ADY, not yet 70, but with no Other ATTRACTIONS and ACCOMPLISHMENTS, will consent to act as WET BLANKET at any Social Gathering where the Young People are likely to be Too HILARIOUS.

**L**ITTLE MARY, still quite Young and Hearty, offers her SERVICES Gratis at Comfortable Home where a Good TABLE is kept.

**P**OLICEMAN, Sociable, who dreads the dullness of a Christmas Evening Beat, is available for WELCOME by GREGARIOUS COOK.

**D**YSPEPTIC, broken-down, who has not eaten a SQUARE MEAL for years, will readily assist as a DEAD-HEAD at the Christmas Dinner of High-class BOARDING ESTABLISHMENT in return for Three Days' Lodging and Use of COSY CORNER.

**M**R. PUNCH, ever young, who can keep CHRISTMAS anywhere, will preside over every Yule-tide party in the Kingdom.



### THE ADVANTAGES OF PROTECTION.

I WELL remember when it was that some conception of the vast importance of this subject first dawned upon me. I was, at the time, quite a small boy, but with very large ideas as regards providing myself with the necessaries of life, as I interpreted the phrase. "Wholesale Confiscation" expresses admirably the salient features of my *modus operandi* at this period, a policy which involved constant friction with various hostile powers, owing to the restrictive measures which they thought fit to adopt for the safeguarding of their interests in the larder and in the store cupboard.

Let it be stated plainly here that I was then distinctly averse to Protection in any shape or form.

My first important change of policy occurred in connection with the imports of tobacco.

The largest power in our community (who practically controlled the import of this commodity at that time) finding that, in spite of his protective restrictions, he was losing a large proportion of his own profitable enjoyment of this staple article—and suspecting the cause—invited me to a discussion of the points at issue. The discussion resolved itself into a remarkably Free Tirade upon my behaviour in the matter, and ended with a peremptory command "to go to my room," and there to await his peroration.

It was a serious situation, and demanded a rapid review of all my preconceived ideas; I could not fail to recognise the extreme gravity of the occasion and the pressing nature of the danger to my unprotected condition.

What was to be done? Mind you, this was the first time in my recollection that the Phys'cal Question had any particular interest for me personally.

*Retaliation* was not to be thought of for a moment; *Negotiation* was not likely to be attended with even the slightest degree of success; *Sequestration* appealed to me strongly as a possible solution of the difficulty (I was always of a retiring disposition), but, when half-way under the bed, common-sense warned me that this course held out no prospect of final evasion of the threatened evil, and might even result in an alarming aggravation of it;—*Emigration* occurred to me, but the sound of firm, decided footsteps ascending the stairway convinced me that further debate on the point must prove futile—my retreat was cut off; one other alternative suggested itself, and I acted upon it. Even after this long interval I must confess to a feeling of pardonable pride at the quickness of my decision, and at the admirable

promptitude and dexterity with which I gave it a practical—and fairly natural—shape. In short—I adopted principles of protection, with the happy result (speaking from my point of view) that I escaped any inconvenience that must otherwise have resulted from the incidence of what he was pleased to call his "duty" (laid on with a slipper).

I do not claim that this incident is on "all fours" (the expression recalls the helplessness of my position) with the larger question which is at present giving the average individual something upon which he may animadvert with confidence born of supreme ignorance, bolstered up by nice, long, fat words of dubious meaning.

There were, in my mind, no fears of attacks on corn, the bastinado never



Gentle Stranger (to nervous gentleman returning from a Christmas-tide party. "APPEY NEW YEAR T' YE, GUV'NOR. YOU WOULDN'T LIKE TO MAKE ME A PRESENT OF THE GOLD WATCH AND CHAIN AS YOU'VE GOT ABOUT YOU, LIKEWISE A FEW GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS FOR GOOD CONDUCT?")

having been favoured as a punitive expedient in our community; but, as a straw will indicate the direction of the wind, so may this practical example of the benefits derivable from properly adjusted protective principles, as applied solely to the more vulnerable parts of the system, be of some use and help to those who find it difficult to determine unaided what to believe of the mass of conflicting statistics and statements with which they find themselves confronted at the present juncture.

THE announcement, in a Tunbridge Wells shop window, of "Accordion Pleated Nuns" finds a terrible parallel in the *Hants and Sussex News*, where a firm of bootmakers advertises that it has "engaged the services of Practical Hand-sewn Men."

### THE REFORMED SET.

[A writer in the *Ladies' Field* has replied to RITA's indictment of the Smart Set with the statement that their pleasures are in reality simple and strenuous. Their favourite game is said to be Shinty, which is described as "a wild and tumultuous version of hockey, in which there are absolutely no rules."]

IT WAS Lord ADALBERT PERCEVAL CHOLMONDLEY-CHOLMONDLEY's first season in London after an absence of five years. In the winter of 1903 he had been compelled by financial troubles to emigrate to Clapham. For five years he had trekked about the Great Common, teaching the natives of that unexplored region Bridge and similar games of skill, and now, having by these means amassed a handsome fortune, he had returned to the ancestral residence in Belgravia, prepared to fill once more his long-vacated place in the Smart Set.

The Red Book informed him that his old friends, the BRABAZON-SMITHS, still lived at their old address. Thither on the afternoon after his arrival he repaired.

As he approached the drawing-room a curious intermittent thudding sound reached his ears, and the voice of the footman announcing his name was drowned in a burst of applause. Something interesting seemed to have been going on in the middle of the room. It was evidently over, for people were strolling about, talking to one another. Lord ADALBERT saw his host coming towards him, and went to meet him.

Mr. BRABAZON-SMITH greeted him effusively.

"What has been going on?" he replied in answer to a question. "Oh, you ought to have come earlier. It's over now. We've just been fighting off the semi-finals of the Smart Set Middle Weights competition."

"The what?"

"I keep forgetting that you have been abroad for so long. We go in a great deal for Boxing now in Society. I fancy we were taking to athletics when you left. We used to play Shinty then, if I recollect rightly. The game is still very popular. Poor old MOUNT-ARARAT—you remember him?—was killed at it the other day. We all told him that he was too old, but he would play, and he got a fractured skull and never recovered. But come round with me, and I'll show you a few of our celebrities. You see that wiry-looking man? That is the Duke of DATCHET. He has just beaten the Stockbrokers' champion over the Brighton course. He is talking to the man they call SANDOW THE SECOND. He can lift a billiard table in his teeth. Strictly between ourselves he owes his great social success entirely to the feat, for he has few other merits.

Just beyond him is Sir JOHN GREGORY, who defeated HACKENSCHMIDT at the Tivoli the other night. The Terrible Bart they call him. Those two men are the best half-backs in the Park Lane Prowlers' F.C. They are playing for England next Saturday against Wales. The Prowlers have had a very good season this year. They beat Oxford, Cambridge, Blackheath, and Newport, and drew with Richmond after a great game. That tall man by the fireplace is our full-back. He dropped two goals against Blackheath from outside the half-way line. Both against the wind, too. Oh, yes, we are a capital team. You must join us. Then we run a cricket team, too, the Belgravia Butterflies. We were very successful last season, and the Marquis of ANGLESEY, who headed our averages, is going out with WARNER's next team to Australia. There was a little difficulty at first, but they said he might wear his jewels, so it's all right, and he's going. DOWNSHIRE has been invited, too. He's our best bowler. So clever, you know."

"And you still play Bridge, of course?" queried Lord ADALBERT.

"Bridge? Bridge? Don't know it. Is it a game? You must teach it us."

In one of the larger oases on the Great Common you will see a simple red-brick hut. On its door-post are the words "Wistaria Villa." Enter, and you will be shown into the presence of Lord ADALBERT PERCEVAL CHOLMONDLEY-CHOLMONDLEY. He has returned to the wilds.

#### MR. PUNCH'S TARIFF COMMISSION.

WHEREAS it has been represented to Mr. Punch that divers of his readers and liege subjects are troubled and perturbed in their minds as to whether it were better to have "A Large Loaf and No Wages" or "Large Wages and No Loaf," therefore Mr. Punch, in the exercise of his supreme authority, has decreed that the following persons, individuals, and nonentities shall constitute his Royal Tariff Commission:—

Mr. A. J. BALFOUR—a rising young Member of Parliament who has fairly earned a position of responsibility.

Mr. RUDYARD KIPLING—the famous engineering expert.

Mr. ALFRED DAVIES, M.P.—the greatest authority on the Welsh cigar trade.

Mr. HARRIS—the Sausage King. An authority on the food of the lower classes.

Mr. J. M. BARRIE—THE authority on the food of the upper ten.

Sir H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN—administrative experts of the best official type.

Mr. BRODRICK—official type.

Dr. ROBERTSON NICOLL—as 'A Man of Kent,' will adequately represent



#### GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

"UNCLE FITZ-MIDAS HAD QUARRELLED WITH US—WE WERE ESTRANGED. WE VENTURED TO INVITE HIM AT CHRISTMAS-TIME—HE ACCEPTED. WITH DELIGHT WE OFFERED HIM THE OLIVE BRANCH. . . . WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE, AND THERE IS AN END OF OUR GREAT EXPECTATIONS."

[Extract from despairing letter of Georgina to dear friend.

the hop trade and brewing interests.

Mr. MAX PEMBERTON—a noted spinner of long yarns.

Dr. CLIFFORD—a unique expert in racks, thumb-screws, and faggots.

Mr. A. HARMSWORTH—England's largest mirror manufacturer.

Mr. H. W. MASSINGHAM—the famous importer and manufacturer of atrocities.

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL—representing Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Mr. JESSE COLLINGS—representing the important bottle-washing industry.

Mr. JUSTICE GRANTHAM—the chosen representative of the publican interest.

Lord LANSDOWNE—the "revolver" and "railway" expert.

Mr. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN—a gentleman whose varying views on economic questions are calculated to intro-

duce an element of judicial balance into the discussions of the Commission.

Secretary to the Commission, Dr. RUTHERFOORD HARRIS, who will prefix to the Commission's Report (already in type, through the benevolent forethought of Mr. Punch) such date or dates as may seem to the joint wisdom of the Commissioners best calculated to impress the public.

Given at our Palace in Bouverie Street this thirtieth day of December, 1903.

PUNCH.

#### Wise and Otherwise.

THE wise man, by the old familiar rule, Is wise, because he knows himself a fool. The foolish man (all history will show it), Is he who is a fool, but doesn't know it.

## LEAP-YEAR PROSPECTS.

DAWN, at whose breaking the hearts of the gloomy  
 Quickened like trees at the presage of Spring,  
 Tell me of Her that is coming to woo me,  
 Coming to wed me, her bridegroom, her king;  
 Year, whose propitious arrival may restitute  
 Courage in celibates worn at the knee,  
 Friend of philogamists baffled and destitute,  
 What of the bride you are bringing to me?

Is she a maiden commanding and queenly—  
 Deep-eyed and beautiful—pleasant and plain?  
 Is she—great WELLER!—a widow, serenely  
 Settled on trying her fortunes again?  
 Or is she fairly dainty and winsome—  
 Sweet one-and-twenty, or still in her teens?  
 Speak of her looks and her "ways" and put in some  
 Sound information concerning her "means."

How will she woo me? With ogling and deep sighs,  
 Floods of hyperbole, butter and gush?  
 Should I be placidly blind to her sheeps' eyes?  
 How in the world can I compass a blush?  
 Say, if the lady insists upon kneeling,  
 Calls me "beloved," or a matter of taste,  
 What sort of lunatic I shall be feeling?  
 What shall I do with my hands and my feet?

When, in response to her fervid persuasion,  
 I have emitted a faltering "Yes,"  
 Who should proceed to improve the occasion,  
 Which should impart the initial caress?  
 If she takes liberties, ought I to scold her?  
 Is it "laid down," or a matter of taste,  
 Which head reclines on the other one's shoulder,  
 Whose arm encircles the other one's waist?

Truly, O Leap Year, your sporting tradition,  
 When it's applied to a definite fact,  
 Rather inverts one's accustomed position,  
 Rather demands the employment of tact!  
 Still, it displays a refreshingly bright side;  
 Novel, as well; for however things go,  
 I'm not afraid of them—I'm on the right side—  
 I needn't fear that monotonous "No!"

DUM-DUM.

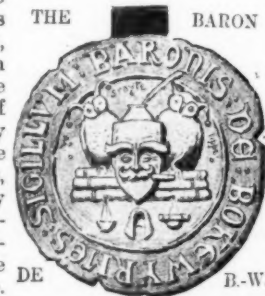
## OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

THE Baron, when he gives a criticism or an opinion, speaks like a book, and in this capacity he feels handsomely bound to record in public his honest admiration for *The Great Masters*, a set of reproductions in photogravure (published in London by W. HEINEMANN) from the finest works of the most famous painters down to the year 1800, with an introduction and descriptive text by Sir MARTIN CONWAY. The five parts of this most striking and interesting collection are sold at five shillings apiece, each containing four perfect reproductions of the originals. Just one-and-three-pence apiece according to the cockerest Cocker! And certainly worth three times the money, whether to keep in portfolio or to place on the walls appropriately framed. As a fitting Christmas gift to adorn an artistic feast, the Baron cannot imagine a present better adapted to a "table of contents" than these beautiful plates so perfectly and satisfactorily filled. In every plate there is some exceptional delicacy, dressed to perfection, and served up in deep rich brown photo-gravy, so appetising in appearance that the demand for a further supply at the same reasonable table d'hôte price (five shillings and three pence a-head) is an assured certainty.

*War Sketches in Colour* (A. & C. BLACK), by Captain S. E. ST. LEGER, who possesses a ready pencil, and more than one observant eye. This illustrated book is exceptionally interesting as depicting various incidents in the Boer War. The artist and scribe—two single gentlemen rolled into one—was, like the sailor who sang about the battle of the Nile, "there all the while," and so these sketches were made on the spot, and having been, subsequently, artistically coloured and reproduced, are bright in effect, and evidently true to life. The book, written in a chatty style, has many interesting anecdotes. It is somewhat of the nature of an illustrated diary, and, as the author assures us, not to be taken by any means as a history of the Boer War; nor on the other hand as mere romance.

If any one (writes the Baron's Oxonian acolyte) has omitted to pay all his Christmas devoirs, no more delightful gift is available than *Oxford: Painted by John Fulleylove, R.I., Described by Edward Thomas* (Messrs. A. & C. BLACK). This book is calculated to bring all true sons of Oxford to a still deeper sense of the charms of their *Alma Mater*. If any fault-finding be possible, it may be urged that Mr. FULLEYLOVE has a little Italianised the skies and landscape of Oxfordshire, and that Mr. THOMAS, in his graceful and ingenious commentary—wherein by the way he unearths a first-rate Spoonerism from the pages of ANTHONY à WOOD—is now and again betrayed into a slight preciosity of style.

The reappearance, in the "Modern Classics" series, after so many years, of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, by CHARLES READE, offered to the public by JOHN LONG at the ridiculously small price of two shillings, is interesting as a literary landmark on the progressive road of English romance. "A small portion of this tale," CHARLES READE himself informs us in the preface, "first appeared in *Once a Week*, July—September, 1859, under the title of *A Good Fight*." Then he went to work at it for over a year, and developed the story so considerably that, as he tells us in the same preface, "four-fifths of it are a new composition." Was this development an improvement? "I doubt it, said the carpenter," and ditto says the Baron to that expression of hesitancy. CHARLES READE was a literary *Autolyus*—a scraper-together of unconsidered trifles, which he carefully numbered, lettered and indexed in one of his commonplace collection books. READE used some of this material up in concocting what he honestly considered as historical romance after the method of WALTER SCOTT, with a dash of VICTOR HUGO. Frequently in matters of detail, where he flattered himself on being strictly accurate, he was just the contrary, and generally his quickly-acquired knowledge was only a superficial gloss. READE's "defects," Mr. HANNAFORD BENNETT truly says, "arose from what has been called 'the dangerous influence of the stage.'" In the excessive praise bestowed on this particular novel by Sir WALTER BESANT and Mr. SWINBURNE the Baron deferentially owns himself unable to join. He boldly tried to read this novel right through; but, starting gaily, and undaunted by the use of big capital letters which READE employed whenever he wanted specially to attract the attention of his readers to a sensational incident, the Baron was compelled to own himself fairly beaten before he had got anything like half through the volume, and only pulled himself together in time to master the last few chapters, which are well and touchingly written. The illustrations, executed in a kind of Albert Düreresque imitation manner, are quaint and on the whole effective.





## AIRS AND GRACES.

[Women seem to be taking seriously to wind-instruments. The female orchestras at Earl's Court are still fresh in the mind, and now a women's brass band is giving performances nightly in at least one place of entertainment in London.—*The Globe*.]

You bandsmen who for years have known

What your conductor's every wave meant,

And you who blissfully have blown  
Your unskilled tune beside the pavement,

Too long you've been content to play,  
Secure in figurative clover;  
Go cast your instruments away!  
Your day is practically over.

No more will maidens deign to touch  
The grand piano's chequered keyboard,

And other implements of such  
As wish, by turns, to bore and be bored;

Trombone and ophicleide shall thrill  
As once guitar and violin did;  
And women prove that they are still  
Undoubtedly the longest winded.

Old customs now give place to new;  
Women will put the bugler's sash on;  
Hungarian bands will not be blue  
If blue is not the latest fashion;  
At *chic* At Homes, the men grown shy  
Will leave the airy paths they trod free,

While orchestras of women eye  
The bâton of a Madame GODFREY.

It's comforting to call to mind  
That, quelled by our pneumatic Graces,

Bands of the brazen German kind  
Must raise the wind in other places;  
At first the parting needs must smart,  
But this should cheer us when we've borne it:—

The song which never reached a heart  
Might reach it from a lady's cornet.

## SOCIETY GOSSIP.

Few more delightful house-parties have I seen (writes the Little Bird) than that organised this Christmas at the Alexandra Palace by the ever-popular Sir THOMAS LIPSON. Many of the best-known Englishmen accepted his invitation, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy Sir THOMAS's princely hospitality. Practical jokes are now much played by the best people, and of these there was no lack. Holly leaves were put in Mr. TOM SMITH's pyjamas, and a magnificent apple-pie bed was thoughtfully prepared for Mr. PEARS.

Mr. CATESBY, whose drolleries were



## TROUBLES OF A WOULD-BE SPORTSMAN.

## No. I.—BADGER DIGGING.

*Enthusiast*. "NOW THEN, IF HE SHOULD BOLT OUT THAT SIDE, ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS JUST TO FREEZE ON TO HIS TAIL TILL I CAN GET ROUND. AND MIND HE DOESN'T GET HOLD OF YOU!"

greatly relished, made a perfect booby-trap with a roll of cork lino surmounted by a garden roller. It was intended for Dr. WILLIAMS, but fell on and nearly terminated Mr. BEECHAM's Career. An excellent magnesium flashlight group of the guests was taken by Mr. DINNEFORD, and Messrs. ENO and LAMPLOUGH were prominent amongst the revellers. In the hocker-ball doubles Messrs. LAMBERT AND BUTLER showed splendid form against Messrs. DERRY AND TOMS, and after an exciting tussle the first prize in the Bridge tournament was carried off by Mr. PONTING.

THE BACON CONTROVERSY.—The omission of this article from Mr. CHAMBERLAIN's scheme of Food Taxes shows how wrong it is to call him a Whole Hogger.

## THE LATEST OUTRAGE IN MOROCCO.

[“In obtaining leather for the full morocco, three-quarter levant and half-morocco bindings . . . over 500,000 goats have been requisitioned.”—*Mr. Hugh Chisholm in the "Times," December 18, 1903.*]

THEY dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Surrounding far Tangier,  
A race with whom in former times  
None wished to interfere.

Secluded from the world they lived,  
Unheeding, as they lay,  
How many sets with leather backs  
Were ordered day by day:

Till on the herd the binders fell  
With awful impetus.  
They slew them for the *Times*, and O  
The difference to us!

## HOMEWARD BOUND.

(EXTRACTS FROM THE TRAVEL DIARY OF TOBY, M.P.)

*Boston, Tuesday morning. R.M.S. Ivernia.*—Here, after long drive through teeming streets, is the boldly labelled Cunard Pier. The MEMBER FOR SARK always under impression that the Cunard Pier was its Chairman, Lord INVERCLYDE. Finds it's an ordinary wharf, its walls washed by the deep sea on which the *Ivernia* rides, like hound in leash, eager for the start.

The trumpet announces luncheon as we slowly make our way through the carefully-marked channel that makes a pathway for ocean steamers right up to the Pier. When, an hour later, we come on deck, we are well out at sea, the low coast on which Boston is built a cloud on the western horizon.

*Wednesday night.*—Of all the marvellous resources of civilisation on the *Ivernia* not least is the Marconi telegraph station. In a small cabin over the Captain's bridge, near the foremast, sits a young man watching and listening. On a day during our outward voyage a hundred miles to the southward the *Campania* was making her way eastward. The Cunard liners moving with the regularity of railway trains, it is possible to locate their position at a given moment. Half-an-hour before midnight the sister ships should be abreast each other. It was a pitch-dark starless night. Over the taffrail nothing to be seen but the spray of the cloven waves flashing in the electric light from deck and state cabins. Yet, afar off, unseen, approaching each other on parallel lines, at the aggregate rate of nearly fifty miles an hour, the mighty steamers drew nearer and nearer. Ships that pass in the night.

We had something to say to the *Campania*, and she had a message for us. Ours was already off, making its way through the viewless night in search of the vessel which at its nearest approach was separated by fifty miles. As in the little cabin we looked and waited the answer came. A crackling light on the glass cylinder: the operator reads out the mystic message, which, after all, is prosaic enough.

It happened on that night that Mr. Punch, after his hospitable habit that has lived through nearly sixty years, entertained his young men round "the old Mahogany Tree." I ought to have been there, but, not being a bird—you see the difficulty? Here at hand was the wizard of wireless telegraphy. Through his agency I sent fraternal greeting, a process of communication from mid-Atlantic to Bouverie Street that would make my old Master, so to speak, sit up.

"Toby, dear Boy," I hear Mr. Punch

say, "when you and I were first acquaint, there were no larks of this kind. I believe it all comes of your going into Parliament."

*Thursday.*—At breakfast this morning Captain mentioned interesting fact in natural history. At certain seasons, when codfish throng the comparatively shallow waters that whelm the Banks of Newfoundland, there is scarcity of food. Below a certain depth—and there are always 30 fathoms over the Banks—food abounds, the creatures that supply it living in fancied security. A resolute cod may dive even to the bottom. But at that depth, so light does its body become by contrast with the density of the water, that the explorer shoots up before he has time to make a meal.

This condition is mastered by a smart device. The codfish, in whose eyes (especially when boiled) there is no speculation, dives straight to the pebbly bottom of the sea, selects a nice portable stone, disposes of it in his gullet, and is master of all he surveys. The pebble, acting as ballast, or as the leaden soles to the diver's boots, keeps the fish down in the lower depths, enabling him to breakfast, dine, and sup at leisure.

I don't know whether my old and esteemed friend Sir HENRY THOMPSON has in his note-book any illustrations of, or comments upon, "Stone in Cod." The fact here mentioned is incontestable, familiar to all fishermen on the Banks. Our captain is not the kind of man to go inventing things of this kind.

*Monday, Mid-Atlantic.*—Some 900 people "in peril on the sea" thank their stars that it finds them on the good ship *Ivernia*. She does not rank among the fastest of the Cunard fleet. She breaks no record, content with doing her modest 350 knots a day. But the run is accomplished with a comfort unknown to those who, bound for New York, go down to the sea in ships that make the passage within a week.

Barring thirty-six hours of fog, we had up to yesterday a fair passage. Can't drag in the familiar mill-pond as descriptive of state of the Atlantic. Passing ships, as we noted, with the equanimity with which men contemplate other people's difficulties, found the sea a bit rough. For the splendidly built *Ivernia* it was so smooth that up to yesterday I had, unguarded, on the table in my state-room a jar of roses, parting gift from Boston.

At sunset the wind rose rapidly, growing into a hurricane, whose force our captain, thirty years at sea, had never known exceeded. For eight hours the vessel doggedly held her way. Between one and two in the morning a huge sea, rising high as the funnel-top, swooped down on the deck. The noise deafening. The big ship shuddered

through every plank. To passengers wide awake in their berths it seemed the end of things. The *Ivernia*, after some staggering, pulled herself together and got again into stride. But the fight was unequal; the great Atlantic in angriest mood wrestling with a solitary ship. Hove-to, and lay for sixteen hours with head to the storm. When the run was made up at noon to-day it was found that in twenty-four hours we had covered eighty-three miles, a pace at which a man easily accomplishes his morning walk.

Pretty tough experience. But a happy day and night compared with what might have been on any other steamer. The *Ivernia* takes a day more than smarter vessels of the fleet to do the voyage. It is a day well spent, especially when the wintry winds do blow.

*Thursday.*—Liverpool at last.

*Business done.*—Our voyage to the States and back. Journeys end in London's greeting.

## EX LUCE LUCELLUM.

THE Berlin correspondent of the *Morning Post*, who seems to be something of a humorist, recently telegraphed a brief summary of the passionate protest published by the *Allgemeine Richard Wagner Verein* against the projected performance of *Parsifal* in New York. The protest asserts that, while it has no desire to criticise the verdict of an American Judge on the legal aspect of the question, it feels impelled to give public expression to its indignation that no means can be found to prevent the sacrilege that is about to be committed in the interests of pelf as opposed to art. "RICHARD WAGNER bequeathed to art a sacred legacy which he desired to be cultivated in the hallowed building erected by him. This sublime legacy is about to be profaned in the land of dollars for the benefit of audiences to whom the essential character of Wagnerian art has never been, nor probably ever will be, revealed."

At which Mr. Punch is compelled to observe "Hoity-toity!" All this talk about "pelf" and "art" is great nonsense. No one can pretend that the performances of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth are not financially extremely profitable, and "pelf" is "pelf" whether acquired in the land of dollars or the land of marks and pfennigs. RICHARD WAGNER never bequeathed *Parsifal* as "a sacred legacy to art." He bequeathed it, quite rightly, to Frau WAGNER, and one is glad to think she has found it a very valuable property. Nor is there any reason to believe that "the essential character of Wagnerian art"—whatever that may mean—is less likely to be



revealed to Americans in America than to Americans at Beyreuth. Again Mr. PUNCH exclaims "Hoity-Toity!"

### THE SLUM CHILD.

["The problem of the little London boy, which day by day confronts puzzled magistrates, is really the problem of the London parent. For example, two little boys of twelve and nine years of age respectively have already a long career of burglary behind them. Another diminutive youth, because his mother refused to allow him to go to a theatre, threatened to slit his weasand with a clasp-knife. Our fathers would have adopted a short way with these 'incorrigibles.'"]—*Daily Chronicle*.]

'ENERY 'ARWOOD, *ætat.* five,  
Was the boldest baddest babe alive.  
It was young 'ENERY's daily rule  
To cut his class at the Infant School.  
What fun, he thought, for a man like me  
To waste my time on the A B C,  
When I might be walking out my gal,  
Or smoking a fag with a kindred pal?  
So he loafed about with a *blasé* air,  
Or picked a pocket here and there,  
Or helped himself to the lollipops,  
Or pilfered the tills in the neighbours' shops—  
For though he was young in point of time,  
Young 'ENERY 'ARWOOD was old in crime.

In vain did 'ENERY 'ARWOOD *père*  
Lavish on 'ENERY *filis* his care.  
"My son," he sometimes would begin,  
"You know very well that the wages of sin—"  
But as soon as the parent's purpose dawned  
On 'ENERY *filis*, the youngster yawned—  
Yawned such a yawn that the father blushed,  
And slunk from the filial presence, crushed.

Policemen, burly and big and strong,  
Shuddered when 'ENERY came along,  
For underneath his baby frock  
One caught a hint of a pistol stock,  
And round the neighbourhood rumour ran

That 'ENERY never had missed his man.  
Houses were burgled and Scotland Yard  
Bade every constable be on his guard.  
But never a man dared place a gyve  
On 'ENERY 'ARWOOD, *ætat.* five.

What would have been the end—what woes  
Wrought by that infant, goodness knows,  
Had not Fortune intervened  
To save our diminutive, desperate fiend.

It happened thus. On a wintry night,  
When the sky was black and the ground was white,  
A pal of 'ENERY's chanced to call  
To take him round to a music hall.  
"You ain't a-goin'," his mother said,  
"No, that you ain't wiv that cold in your 'ead."



### A RARA AVIS.

*Little Girl (finishing her description of the Battle of Cressay). "AND EVER SINCE THEN THE PRINCE OF WALES HAS BEEN BORN WITH FEATHERS!"*

"O, ain't I, Ma?"—and I'm sorry to say  
He made a long nose in a vulgar way.  
Others perhaps would have dared no more,  
But motherly love is brave to the core:  
She caught him up in her arms; he cried  
And kicked and screamed in his wounded pride.  
"I'll slit my weasand—I ain't afraid"—  
And he pulled out a knife with a great big blade.  
She snatched it away: "Little brat!" she said,  
And gave him a spanking and put him to bed.

Next morning 'ENERY, very sore—  
A feeling he never had felt before—

Arose and washed, though the water was cold,  
And went to school as he was told.  
Now he is *dux* and a model boy,  
His teacher's pride and his parents' joy—  
He has forgotten his young rascality  
And won the medal for punctuality.

### Annus Pluvialis.

THE year now totters to his long repose,  
And shakes his dripping garments as he goes.  
Farewell, old King! Though sovereign glories wane,  
We could not, if we would, forget your rain.



### THE FESTIVE SEASON.

"SURE I WISH I HAD THE BOTTLE O' WHISKY THAT 'UD FIT THEM CORKSCREWS!"

#### CHARIVARIA.

WE like to see publishers seize their opportunities. Manchuria is rapidly becoming Russianised. Messrs. GEORGE BELL AND SONS have produced a book entitled, *How to Identify Old China*.

And, on the subject of the weather, a new edition of FIGUIER'S *The World Before the Deluge* is in preparation.

And a history of Prize-Fighting is to be written. We would propose, as a name, *The Scrap Book*.

The writer of a novel signed with a *nom de guerre*, on being accused of the authorship, cleverly replied, "The pseudonym in question does not conceal my identity."

"Which are the most beautiful scenes in the United Kingdom?" is the title of a competition in a new periodical. Since the Irish nights in the House of Commons have ceased it is really difficult to say.

That Englishmen sell their wives every Saturday at Smithfield is a fact

well known on the Continent. That an immense traffic in children also takes place has only just been divulged. A French gentleman who, during a visit to London, saw in the Sale season a notice outside a place of amusement, "Children half price," devotes a chapter to the subject in a book of his adventures abroad.

Statistics show that most centenarians die orphans.

It is said that in a very young and new park on the outskirts of London notices are exhibited:—"Visitors are requested not to pluck the trees."

We hear that the Twopenny Tube is to have a rival, whose lifts will play tunes as they go up and down.

SIR THOMAS LIXTON has been presented with a service of plate in recognition of his plucky fight for the America Cup. The service was an exceedingly handsome one. Sir THOMAS announced that he would have another try for the Cup.

Many of the panels in the Royal Exchange have been decorated with great historical paintings, and it has been proposed that those which remain shall be devoted to recording the humbler virtues of the citizens. The following subjects have been suggested:—"An Alderman at a Banquet declaring he has had Enough," "A Bus Driver Apologising for Colliding with a Four-wheeled Cab," "A City Policeman thanking a Small Boy for Reminding him to get his Hair Cut."

THE KAISER has declared that the Germans won Waterloo. We had hoped that his voice had completely recovered, but it seems to be playing him tricks again.

The two Macedonian leaders with different views are now in London. The case of Macedonia is receiving particular sympathy from the Liberals in this country, who also appreciate the difficulty of a dual leadership.

The Admiralty has issued some new orders with a view to promoting effective marksmanship in the Navy. The War Office, in view of the recent use of ball cartridge at Camberley, thinks it risky to do anything to increase straight shooting in the Army.

We are now one step nearer the Perfect Sabbath. The Westminster City Council has resolved that even the mud in the side roads shall rest on Sundays.

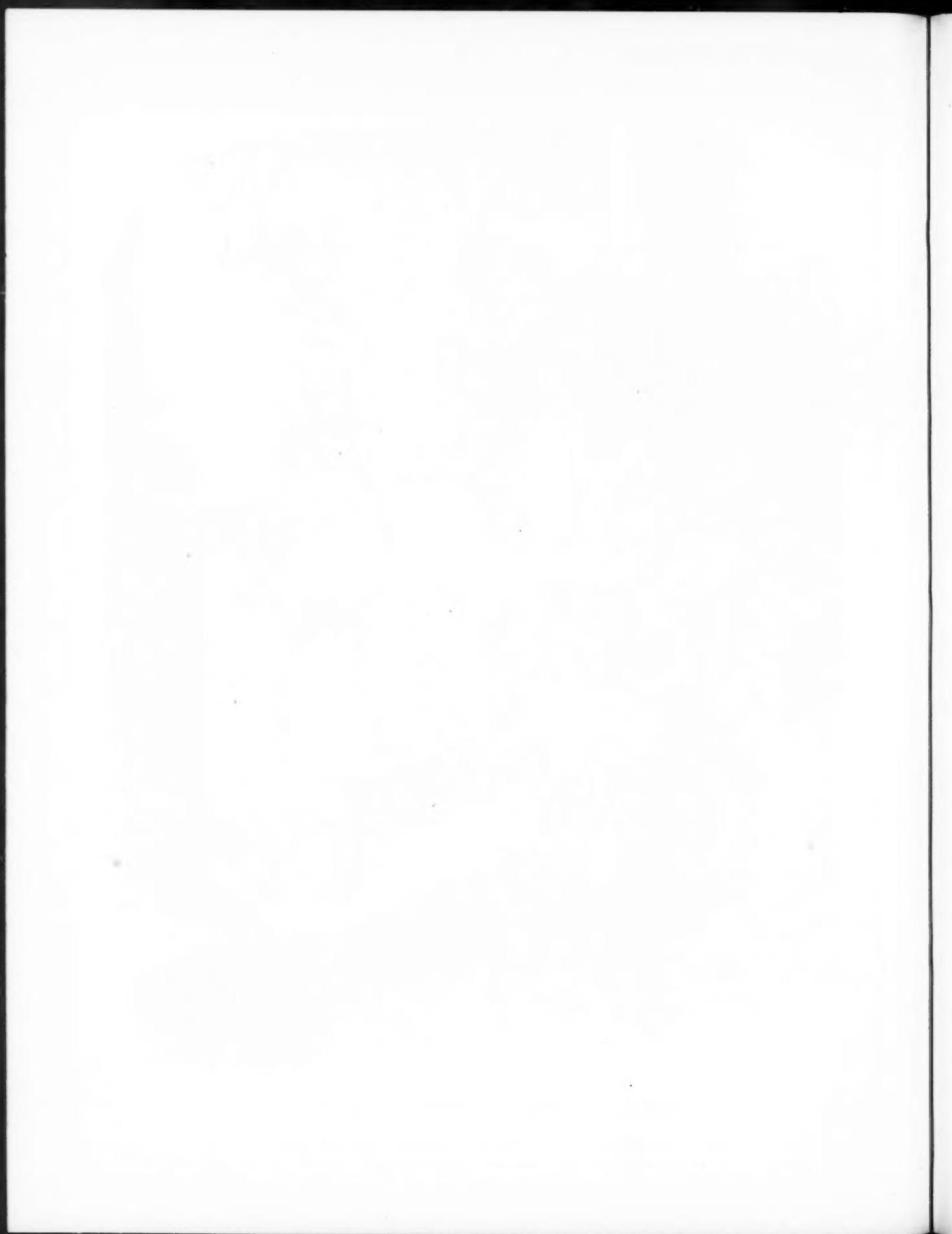


SPEED THE PARTING GUEST.

OLD 1903. "WELL, I'M AFRAID I MUST REALLY SAY GOOD-BYE NOW."

MR. PUNCH. "OH, DON'T APOLOGISE." (*Aside*) "JOLLY GLAD TO SEE THE LAST OF YOU!"







### H.M.S. "OBESITY"; OR, WHAT OUR SAILORS ARE COMING TO.

*First A.B.* "OH LOR, BILL, MY BIG TOE!—F-F-F—IT'S SOMETHING HORFUL THIS MORNING." (*Distant whistle.*) "OH YUS, THAT'S RIGHT! PIPE AWAY! I SEE HUS A CLEARIN' DECKS FOR HACTION, DON'T YOU, BILL?"

*Second A.B.* "NO FEAR! PHIEW-F-F-F. 'ERE, OH I SAY, MATE, PASS US THE BICARBONICK O' POTASS, FOR 'EVIN'S SAKE!"

[The sailor is allowed 60 ounces of moist food per day, and this is of the wrong kind for a fighting man. This he eats at five different meals. He has about three times as much bread as he should have, and about half as much meat. It is a splendid diet to induce obesity, gout, and laziness.—*Dr. Yorke Davies in the "Daily Telegraph."*]

### A METICULOUS AGE.

[See any Journal, not necessarily Medical.]

BEWARE, my friends, you little know the daily risks you run,  
The dangers, all unseen by you, are frightful!  
Be careful how you walk abroad or you will be undone,  
Of perils, too, your home, I fear, is quite full!

Your mentors and tormentors are let loose on ev'ry side,  
The papers all are crammed with words of warning;  
With scare and phantom those who read ought to be terrified  
From the moment that they get up in the morning!

At dawn of day microbophobes implore us not to use  
The soap which holds a virulent bacillus;  
At breakfast-time on no account our letters to peruse—  
Bacteria, too, are lurking there to kill us!

At mid-day we must ask ourselves "Now, do we Overeat?"  
(The *Telegraph* has started this suggestion),  
And, Should we sport the tight top-hat when walking in the  
street,  
And wear our hair away, is next the question.

Then "kissing is at any hour a dangerous game to play"  
(Well, so it is in *one* way, and contagious!)  
And after lunch we mustn't think too much, the croakers  
say,  
Or "brain-fag" will attack the most courageous.

Ice-creams and oysters, water-cress, the fog, and spotted  
veils,

Each have their turn at bringing on a panic;  
The neuropathic bogey next your cigarettes assails,  
For these distil some poison inorganic.

Thus all day long bugbears arise for timid folks to flee,  
And give them fits, no doubt just out of kindness!  
While ev'n at night the terrorists refuse to let us be—  
The latest cry's that "bed-books" lead to blindness!

### QUITE AN ERROR.

SIR.—Having heard the opinion frequently expressed that Mr. CHAMBERLAIN'S notions on Protection were catching on everywhere in the Provinces, I accepted several engagements for house parties at Christmas time, and am still going the round, recording my experiences. In every instance so far, the mansion was full to overflowing, and, invariably, our entertainer was most hospitable. Excellent breakfasts, first-rate luncheons, tip-top dinners, and splendid suppers after dances. Any number of guests present, distinguished and otherwise. Likewise crowds of servants, keepers and tenants from farms round about. And, Sir, I tell you plainly that they were all, that is whenever I saw them at these magnificent meals provided by our thoroughly liberal hosts, everybody present, to a man, was a Free Fooder! Fact.

There's Proof Positive,

Yours,

A NON-PARTING GUEST.

### MR. PUNCH'S SPECTRAL ANALYSES.

#### X.—THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

##### *The Haunted Mill.*

DEAR MR. PUNCH,—I feel sure that at Christmas you will not refuse to insert in your jocund journal a little story of a purely sentimental nature. I feel that at such a season it would be out of place for me to jest. I enclose the MS. Look me up here if you are doing nothing else. The Headless Man will be delighted to see you.

Yours respectfully  
THE ANALYST.

'Twas Christmas night.

Down in the village, at the "Bee and Beer Bottle" all was revelry. Gaffer GILES was singing, for the fifth time in half-an-hour, "*The Fly on the Turnut*." Farmer BATES and Farmer SCROGGINS, forgetful of ancient disagreements, were sitting on the floor with their arms round each other's necks, as lovingly as if they had been Lord ROSEBURY and Sir HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN. Everybody was flushed and happy. But up at the Castle old Sir GUY SCRYMGEUR-DE-VERE-SCRYMGEUR sat silent in his vast dining-hall, alone, but for the pictures of his ancestors that looked down on him from their oak frames. There was little Christmas cheer at the Castle. A dry biscuit and a bottle of Vichy water represented the limits of Sir GUY's taste for orgies. This was not economy. He did not believe that his food would cost him more. He suffered from gout.

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," said Sir GUY, raising his gloomy eyes.

The door did not open, but through it shimmered a white figure. It stood beside the table, shuffling its feet, and looking shame-faced.

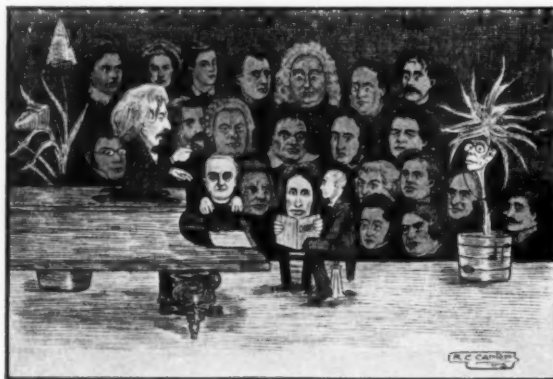
The Baronet started from his chair.

"You!" he cried.

"Me!" said the ghost. "What is bad grammar if it covers a warm heart?"

"To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?" Sir GUY's chilly manner was a byword in Little Pigbury. Once, when he had employed it in an argument with a poacher, the poacher had caught pneumonia. The ghost shivered, and wrapped his winding-sheet more closely round him.

"I thought," he stammered, "that is to say—perhaps—Christmas



### THE AMATEUR PIANIST'S NIGHTMARE.

*The Figure on the Piano.* "YOU MUST PLAY CHOPIN'S BALLADE IN A FLAT MAJOR,—AND MIND, THE FIRST WRONG NOTE—DEATH!"

*Back Row*—Kubelik, Marie Hall, Frank Merick, Brahms, Handel, Sterndale Bennett, Sarasate.

*Second Row*—Schubert, Paderewski (on piano), Rosenthal, Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Grossmith (flower-pot).

*Third Row*—Pachmann, Liszt, Emil Sauer, Mozart, Backhaus, Sir George Grove, Herbert Parsons. *Fourth Row*—Chopin, Schumann.

comes but once a year—goodwill to man—glad to see me."

"My memory," said Sir GUY, with cold courtesy, "is not, I regret to say, what it was, but I think that if I had invited you to visit Castle Scrymgeour, I should remember the circumstance."

The ghost shuffled uneasily.

"Sir GUY," he said hastily, "can we not let bygones be bygones? May I not come back?"

"You left the castle—"

"A year ago to-day."

"As you justly observe, a year ago to-day. You left of your own free will, and against mine. I may add that you seriously dislocated my Christmas arrangements. I had invited a houseful of people to meet you. You were

not there to be met. You left to better yourself. I trust you succeeded."

"Alas, no. For the past twelve months I have endured agonies. For some time I haunted a hopeless vulgarian of the name of SKINNER. He disgusted me, and I left him. After that my career was one long failure. Three times, Sir GUY—pity me—have I been laid."

"Eggs," said the baronet, "are laid every day. They make no complaint."

"But to an egg the process is painless. To a ghost it is anguish. Conceive, Sir GUY, what your sensations would be, were you to tread on a tack and fall backwards downstairs into a tank of ice-cold water. That is the sensation a ghost experiences when laid."

In spite of himself, a look of pity flashed across his hearer's face. The ghost

marked it.

"You would not turn me from your door?" he pleaded.

"If," said Sir GUY, "you prefer, from force of habit, to make your exit through the wall, you are at liberty to do so. Good evening."

"But, Sir GUY—"

At this moment the door opened, and an angel form danced in.

It was Sir GUY's little granddaughter. She saw her old friend the ghost, and uttered a shriek of delight.

"Mewvy Christmas, doast," she cried; "doast tum back again."

Though, even at that early age accustomed to mind her p's and q's, MARJORIE SCRYMGEUR-DE-VERE-SCRYMGEUR had not yet obtained a mastery over her r's and g's.

The ghost placed a shadowy hand on MARJORIE's head, and made a last appeal.

"Sir GUY," he said, in a trembling voice, "it is Christmas night. Down in the village men are treating those who have wronged them to ale, and even whisky. The poacher is digging the game-keeper in the ribs and calling him by his Christian name. The village policeman pats the head which, two days ago, he would have clumped. Will you alone refuse forgiveness to one who pleads for it? And really, don't you know, trifling apart, I am dashed sorry."

There was a silence.

Then Sir GUY rose, and stretched out his hand. There were tears in his eyes.



"I SAY, CAN YOU GIVE ME SOMETHING FOR MY HEAD?"  
"NO. I WOULDN'T TAKE IT AS A GIFT."





"IS the Sun at home?" said Mr. PUNCH, presenting his card.

The scene was the illimitable empyrean. Mr. PUNCH had just alighted from his 40-Pegasus-power Charivar-à-banc, after a rapid transit, and was addressing a smart solar satellite in the brightest of buttons.

"His Radiance is always at home to you, Mr. PUNCH. Please follow me."

The Sage carefully adjusted his smoked-glass pince-nez, anointed his face with liquid air to guard against sunburn, and was rapidly ushered through the intervening photosphere into the coruscating Presence. The august luminary, in spite of his advanced years and rotund figure, seemed to be in excellent preservation. His burnished locks were surmounted by a titanium solar topee, and he wore a double-breasted iridium waistcoat, manganese pantaloons, and carried an aluminium parasol. A sunflower graced his button-hole, and his boots shone with an unearthly sheen.

"Good morning, Mr. PUNCH. And to what do I owe the happiness of this visit?"

"We were all anxious about you," said the Sage, "and I determined to put an end to our suspense by coming in person to see if you really still existed. You see, it's a very long time since we saw you. Not a glimpse of you all the Summer."

"No fault of mine," remarked the Great Luminary. "I was shining just the same as usual. If you did not see me, it must have been because of interposing clouds. You can hardly blame me for them."

"I am at a loss where to place the blame," said the Sage. "Can you suggest anything?"

"Have I not heard rumours of a Fiscal controversy?" replied Apollo. "The exhalations of such a conflict might be very dense and overwhelming."

"But that did not begin till the Summer was done."

"True. Yet have you not a War Office that gives off an enveloping vapour?"

"And you really think," asked Mr. PUNCH, "that the War Commission and the Fiscal Question have been responsible for the inclement season?"

"I will not say that altogether. It is possible that human nature has had something to do with it. Even Planets have their feelings, you know. Supposing that I had been offended——"

"Offended! I trust not. Surely no one——?"

"I don't know. Is it so very pleasant to be told that one's complexion is far from immaculate? Oh yes;

it's no use denying it. It's not as if I hadn't tried things for it. All kinds of things. I sponge my face every evening in the Milky Way; and I'm getting better. But to hear so much about my spots is very discouraging."

"There shall be no more of it. I pledge my word—if you will pardon the fiscal tag."

"But that's not all. Didn't I hear Saturn say that the Indian Famine is being attributed to me? And what is all this indecent Curie-osity about my Little Mary? Suggestions that I'm nothing but radium? It's enough to make a body leave England alone and take to Solar Whist. If I really thought my inside was what your chemists so unfeelingly suggest, I should give you even less attention than before, because I should spend all my time in the Sunny Gymnasium."

Mr. PUNCH interposed with protestations of apology.

"However," added the Sun, "if I have neglected to visit your country, I have had to pay for it."

"As how, your Radiance?"

"By total ignorance, beyond a fact here and there which I have overheard concerning English progress. I know nothing of what has been going on. It is, I assure you, a great loss."

"But that," said the Sage, feeling in his coat-tail pockets, "can be easily and delightfully remedied."

"If I only knew how," said the Sun, "I would do anything."

"Would you shine next summer?" the Sage replied, with meaning.

"Assuredly," said the Sun.

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright—as bright as I alone can make it."

"Then," said Mr. PUNCH, "the thing is done. Allow me to present you with the completest and most fascinating record of recent English history."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the Arch-Orb in agitated tones, "don't say that you mean the——" here he became speechless with emotion, and gasped out some broken sentences, of which Mr. PUNCH could only catch "thirty-five volumes," "instalment system," "six hundred thousand entries," "full morocco," "fifty-seven pounds."

"Calm yourself, my old friend," replied Mr. PUNCH, with a reassuring smile, "the compendium of omniscience I bring you is of another nature," and, so saying, he laid in the Sun's receptive hands his

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